

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION**

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| <b>KIRK EDWARD DOTSON,</b>              | )                                       |
| <b>ID # 1550719,</b>                    | )                                       |
| <b>Plaintiff,</b>                       | )                                       |
| <b>vs.</b>                              | )                                       |
|   | <b>No. 3:10-CV-1878-N-BH</b>            |
|   | )                                       |
| <b>RICK THALER, et al.,<sup>1</sup></b> | )                                       |
| <b>Defendants.</b>                      | )                                       |
|   | <b>Referred for Pretrial Management</b> |

**FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION**

Pursuant to *Special Order 3-251*, this case has been automatically referred for pretrial management.

**I. BACKGROUND**

Plaintiff brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against Rick Thaler, Director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and Mr. Espnha, Property Officer at the Mineral Wells Unit, for alleged lost or stolen property. (Compl. at 3-4; Answers to Magistrate Judge's Questionnaire ("MJQ")<sup>2</sup> 1-2.)

Plaintiff claims that while he was away from the Mineral Wells Unit on a bench warrant, his personal property was lost or stolen from the unit. (Compl. at 3-4.) He contends that his mother contacted the defendants during her unsuccessful attempts to retrieve the property. (MJQ, Ans. 1-2.) Plaintiff seeks \$1,250.00 in damages. No process has been issued.

**II. PRELIMINARY SCREENING**

Plaintiff is an inmate in the Texas prison system who has been permitted to proceed *in forma*

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<sup>1</sup> In answers to a court questionnaire, Plaintiff identified Mr. Espnha as a second defendant. The Clerk of the Court is directed to add him as a defendant.

<sup>2</sup> Answers to the questions posed by the Court constitute an amendment to the complaint. *See Macias v. Raul A. (Unknown), Badge No. 153*, 23 F.3d 94, 97 (5th Cir. 1994).

*pauperis*. As a prisoner seeking redress from an officer or employee of a governmental entity, Plaintiff's complaint is subject to preliminary screening pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. *See Martin v. Scott*, 156 F.3d 578, 579-80 (5th Cir. 1998) (per curiam). Because he is proceeding *in forma pauperis*, his complaint is also subject to screening under § 1915(e)(2). Both § 1915(e)(2)(B) and § 1915A(b) provide for *sua sponte* dismissal of the complaint, or any portion thereof, if the Court finds it is frivolous or malicious, if it fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or if it seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief.

A complaint is frivolous when it “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). A claim lacks an arguable basis in law when it is “based on an indisputably meritless legal theory.” *Id.* at 327. A complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted when it fails to plead “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007); *accord Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1949 (2009).

### **III. SECTION 1983**

Plaintiff seeks monetary damages under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. That section “provides a federal cause of action for the deprivation, under color of law, of a citizen’s ‘rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws’ of the United States” and “afford[s] redress for violations of federal statutes, as well as of constitutional norms.” *Livadas v. Bradshaw*, 512 U.S. 107, 132 (1994). To state a claim under § 1983, Plaintiff must allege facts that show (1) he has been deprived of a right secured by the Constitution and the laws of the United States; and (2) the deprivation occurred under color of state law. *See Flagg Bros., Inc. v. Brooks*, 436 U.S. 149, 155 (1978); *Cornish v. Corr. Servs. Corp.*, 402 F.3d 545, 549 (5th Cir. 2005).

Plaintiff claims that his property was lost or stolen from the Mineral Wells Unit. However, “random and unauthorized” deprivation of property, whether intentional or negligent, neither violates the Constitution nor states a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 when adequate state post-deprivation remedies are available. *See Hudson v. Palmer*, 468 U.S. 517, 533 (1984). Texas law provides adequate state post-deprivation remedies, including a state action for the Texas tort of conversion. *Brewster v. Dretke*, 587 F. 3d 764, 768 (5th Cir. 2009) (citing *Murphy v. Collins*, 26 F.3d 541, 543-44 (5th Cir. 1994)). Because Plaintiff has available state post-deprivation remedies, his claims are legally frivolous under *Hudson* and should be dismissed with prejudice.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATION

Plaintiff’s complaint should be **DISMISSED** with prejudice as frivolous pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b). This dismissal will count as a “strike” or “prior occasion” within the meaning 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).<sup>3</sup>

SIGNED this 3rd day of November, 2010.



IRMA CARRILLO RAMIREZ  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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<sup>3</sup> Section 1915(g), which is commonly known as the “three-strikes” provision, provides:

In no event shall a prisoner bring a civil action or appeal a judgment in a civil action or proceeding under this section, if the prisoner has, on 3 or more prior occasions, while incarcerated or detained in any facility, brought an action or appeal in a court of the United States that was dismissed on the grounds that it is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, unless the prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SERVICE AND  
NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL/OBJECT**

A copy of these findings, conclusions and recommendation shall be served on all parties in the manner provided by law. Any party who objects to any part of these findings, conclusions and recommendation must file specific written objections within 14 days after being served with a copy. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). In order to be specific, an objection must identify the specific finding or recommendation to which objection is made, state the basis for the objection, and specify the place in the magistrate judge's findings, conclusions and recommendation where the disputed determination is found. An objection that merely incorporates by reference or refers to the briefing before the magistrate judge is not specific. Failure to file specific written objections will bar the aggrieved party from appealing the factual findings and legal conclusions of the magistrate judge that are accepted or adopted by the district court, except upon grounds of plain error. *See Douglass v. United Servs. Automobile Ass'n*, 79 F.3d 1415, 1417 (5th Cir. 1996).

  
IRMA CARRILLO RAMIREZ  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE